

The Arch of Success

A Dialogue for Commencement Day

By S. M. A.



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The Arch of Success

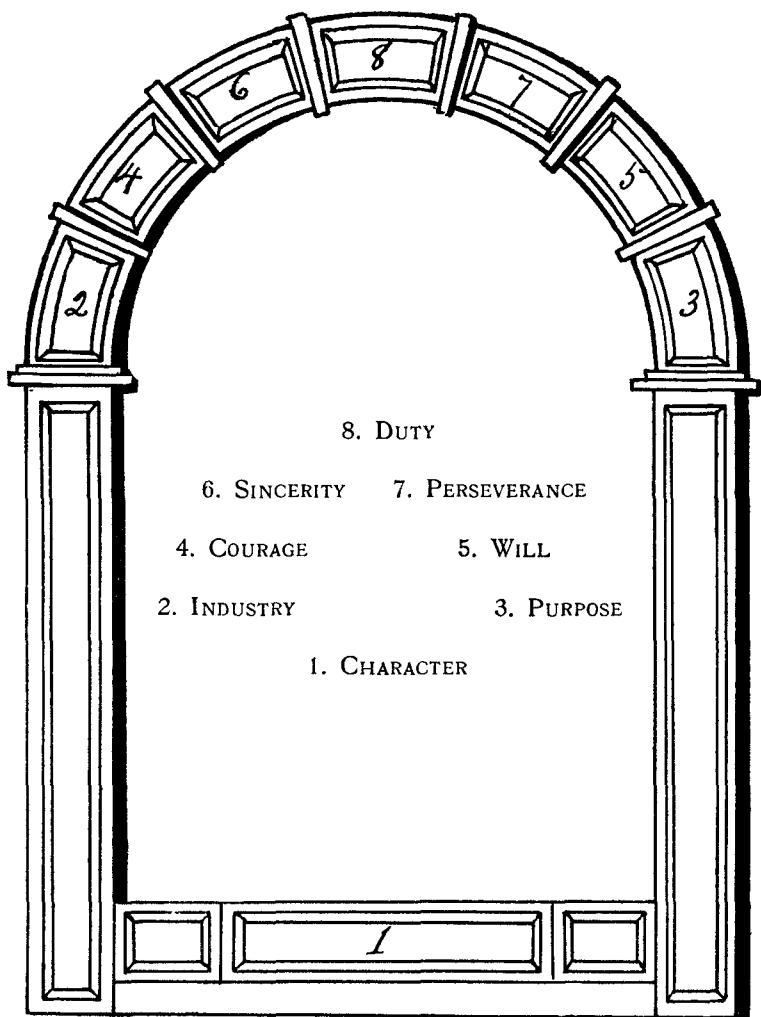
C H A R A C T E R S

EIGHT GRADUATES

- 1st Girl, CHARACTER (foundation).
- 2nd " INDUSTRY.
- 3rd " PURPOSE.
- 4th " COURAGE.
- 5th " WILL.
- 6th " SINCERITY.
- 7th " PERSEVERANCE.
- 8th " DUTY (key-stone).

SYMBOLIC CHARACTERS

- IDLENESS
- PLEASURE
- COWARDICE
- DAY-DREAMS (three)
- FUN



(The Graduates are dressed in white, the Symbolic Characters in appropriate costumes).

The framework of an arch is seen in the centre and rear of the stage, and a table holding the blocks, near the first speaker. The blocks are shaped to fit into the spaces prepared for them in the arch, and have the qualities, "Character," "Industry", etc., inscribed upon them in large letters. Electric lights should be fitted to the arch, to be turned on for the tableau at the end.

After each graduate has placed her block, she remains on her side of the arch, so that the eight girls form a semicircle at the close of the piece, four on each side of the arch.

1st Girl, Character. Before quitting our Alma Mater, girls, suppose we leave behind us some memorial of the class of 19..... I have heard that in some schools the departing graduates plant a tree to be ever a reminder of their student career. Others have left a remembrance in the form of banner, bust, or portrait, to remain in some hall which their busy feet have paced. If you approve, we will build an arch that shall proclaim our views of how success is achieved, and perhaps it will be an inspiration to the students who may follow us.

All. It is a good idea; we will all help in its construction.

2nd Girl, Industry. Tell us how to carry out your plan.

1st Girl, Character. See! (*Pointing to it*) I have already provided the framework for our arch, and here lie the blocks with which to build it. If you like, I will place the foundation, which, in my opinion, should be CHARACTER. Nothing else will replace it. I do not mean reputation, which, as some one has wisely said, is merely what others think we are, but that character which is what God and the angels know we are. True, the good traits with which we begin life are purely gifts of God, but He has left us the task to improve, develop, and make good use of them. Let us, then, lay the foundations of life, broad and deep, in noble, upright, Christian character, and upon it shall we most fittingly raise the superstructure of success.

(*Places her block*).

2nd Girl, Industry. INDUSTRY is evidently one of the first steps that lead to success, so I will choose it as my part of the work in constructing this symbolic arch. Some think that genius counts for more, but we cannot but notice, in studying the lives of great and good men, that continued hard work accomplished more than brilliant talents. Carlyle defined genius as, "a capacity for work." Michael Angelo called it, "eternal patience." When a certain person asked Turner the artist the secret of his success, he replied, "I have no other secret than hard work." Then let us cultivate Industry, and place it next to Character on the structure we are rearing. (*Advancing towards the arch, she is met by Idleness*).

Idleness. Why, my friend, how solemn you look, and what a burden you are carrying! Throw it down, and come, spend a happy hour with me.

2nd Girl. No, no, Idleness; we must part company. I have embraced Industry, and am determined to give it an honored place in yonder arch.

Idleness. Oh! you take life too seriously; you will grow wrinkled and gray before your time.

2nd Girl. Gray hairs with wisdom form a crown of glory, the Scripture tells us. Too often have I lost my time with you, Idleness. Now I intend to acquire wisdom, and the only way is by the aid of Industry.

Idleness. Oh! the very name gives me the blues. What will you gain by your superior wisdom? Who cares any more for a girl because she has mastered Geology, Biology, and all the other 'ologies? Philosophy, Theosophy, or any other 'osophy?

2nd Girl. We'll not reason about it, Idleness. Go your way, and I'll go mine, trusting it will lead me to success. (*Idleness withdraws, and 2nd Girl places her block on the arch, taking her stand on the same side*).

3rd Girl, Purpose. I shall choose PURPOSE, or High Aim, as my contribution to our class memorial. "Nothing venture, nothing have," the proverb says; and the young person who

aims at success should form a definite purpose early in life, then pursue it with earnestness, fidelity, and perseverance. Let us keep before us the highest ideals, and though we may never fully attain them, yet we shall be the better for the striving. "Hitch your wagon to a star," said the philosopher Emerson, meaning that, however lowly our occupation in life, we should keep our minds fixed on lofty things, and our motives pure and noble by the excellence of our Purpose.—I will place my chosen motto.

(*Enter Pleasure*).

Pleasure. (*Decked with flowers*) Whither so fast, my friend? Come and gather flowers with me. The fields are filled with blossoms, and the warm June sun invites us all to be happy beneath his genial rays.

3rd Girl. No, Pleasure; more serious work demands my attention, and I shall not abandon the high purpose I have set before myself today.

Pleasure. Oh! there will be time for that some other day. Come with me, and enjoy the present. Listen to the birds singing. (*Warbling of birds heard in the distance*). The very birds are filled with the spirit of spring, and invite us to join them in their joyous carols.

3rd Girl. Do not tempt me, Pleasure. My aims are different from yours, and I shall finish the work I have undertaken. (*Places her block on the arch.—Pleasure retires*).

4th Girl, Courage. (*Looking at the different blocks*). All these qualities are good, but they will never achieve success without COURAGE. That shall be my contribution to our rising arch. "No cross, no crown." No great or good work was ever accomplished without courage to overcome obstacles. With this quality the stripling David overcame the giant Goliath, a weak woman conquered the tyrant Holofernes, and the brave Columbus crossed unknown seas. It is the sword with which men may cut, when they cannot unravel, the Gordian knot of difficulties. I will place the magic word COURAGE where all may see and be inspired by it.

(*Enter Cowardice*)

Cowardice. What are you trying to do with that big block, my friend?

4th Girl. I am going to give it a prominent place in this arch, where it will be a warning to indolent persons like you.

Cowardice. (*Languidly*) Oh! you will never be able to carry that load; it is too heavy.

4th Girl. With this motto, I can carry even heavier burdens.

Cowardice. You are giving yourself unnecessary trouble. I would be glad to help you, but I am not strong enough. I think I will take my ease in this rocking-chair. (*Sits and fans herself*).

4th Girl. (*After placing her block*) There, my block is in position, and looks very well.—Now, run away, Cowardice; you are only a hindrance to good work.

Cowardice. (*Rising slowly and departing*) Well, that's a polite way to treat an old friend!

5th Girl, Will. Our teachers have talked much to us about Will-Power, and the great things it can effect. I believe it, and shall add this block to our arch. I am not extremely well versed in the lives of the saints, but if I remember the story correctly, a person once asked a holy man how he could become a saint, and quickly the answer came, "By willing it." No doubt the same reply could be given to those who would obtain good results in any department of life. The men who have accomplished great things, the statesmen, conquerors, inventors, and discoverers, were all men of strong will. If some have abused this divine gift by employing it for evil purposes, yet certainly no good has been wrought by men of weak will. Then let us cultivate this heavenly gift, and enlist it in the cause of right. (*Turning to place her block, she perceives little Day-Dreams*). Why, little Day-Dreams, what are you doing here?

1st Day-Dream. We have come to give you pleasant thoughts, and make you happy.

2nd Day-Dream. We want to see you smile and look cheerful.

3rd Day-Dream. We would chase away cares, and make the present joyful.

5th Girl. Ah! little Day-Dreams, the present changes quickly to the future; and if we do not face our cares bravely, they will prove later a heavier burden for our backs.

1st Day-Dream. We will help you bear your burdens.

5th Girl. I fear that you would only make me forget them.

2nd Day-Dream. It is good to forget disagreeable things.

5th Girl. Not if they imply a duty to be performed.

2nd Day-Dream. Oh! If you are going to preach, I'll run away.
(*Runs out*).

3rd Day-Dream. If you are bound to be so solemn, I cannot stay (*Runs out*).

1st Day-Dream. Since I am not wanted, I'll go too. (*Runs out*).

5th Girl. (*Looking after them*) Poor little Day-Dreams! they are very sweet, very attractive; but they interfere with the serious business of life, and I must now accomplish my task. (*Places her block, and stands on the same side of the arch*).

6th Girl, Sincerity. I find here an important quality waiting for a place on the Arch of Success. Indeed, all the virtues are necessary, but it seems to me that SINCERITY is one of the most indispensable. Other qualities may be more brilliant, and false appearances may deceive for a time; but in the end, "Honesty is the best policy." Who does not feel his whole heart going out, in trust and esteem, to the person who never breaks his word, who means what he says, and always keeps his promises? The boy who scorned to tell a lie became a man whose name is one of the most honored in history; while "Honest Abe" is esteemed as the second saviour of his country. Then let "Sincerity" have an honored place in the Arch of Success. (*Places her block*).

7th Girl, Perseverance. (*Looking at the Arch*) I see that our Arch is almost finished; yet it would never be complete without one important block, which it shall be my privilege to place, PERSEVERANCE. It is not enough to have high aims, will to pursue them, industry to execute them, if in the end our courage fails and we throw down our arms.



Only PERSEVERANCE wins the victory and gains the crown. The Scottish Bruce, learning patience from the spider repeatedly mending its broken web, Columbus, calmly reiterating "Onward! Onward!" to his discouraged, mutinous sailors, Kepler, working many years over his great problems in astronomy, teach us the value of perseverance. This word shall be my addition to our noble structure. (*Places her block.—Fun enters gaily, tossing a ball*).

Fun. Now's the time for FUN to appear on the scene. Isn't it jolly? School is over, vacation is here, and we've nothing to do but have a good time for two whole months. Hurrah for the holidays!

8th Girl, Duty. (*Advancing*) Ah! here is my young friend Fun. You seem in fine humor today.

Fun. Of course; what sensible girl wouldn't be gay at the approach of vacation? That's the time worth living for! (*Skipping about and tossing her ball*).

8th Girl. It is, no doubt, the time for us to take some rest and amusement. But a young person who heeds the voice of conscience knows that there are also duties to be performed.

Fun. Oh! leave your moral lessons for Catechism class, and come and have a good time.

8th Girl. It cannot be, Fun. I have a serious work to do. The Class of 19..... are erecting this arch to commemorate their names, and to give a valuable lesson to their younger school-mates.

Fun. Do you think that we youngsters are going to stop in our games, to put on a long face, and study your sermons?

8th Girl. Perhaps not the younger ones, Fun; but I have hopes that some of the older pupils, when, like us, they are about to bid farewell to their Alma Mater, will be inspired by our class memorial to consider carefully what are the elements of a good and useful life, and the qualities that insure success. If you have no inclination to help us in this laudable work, then run away and enjoy your sports.

Fun. Each one to his taste; but as I was not born to be an architect or carpenter or anything that needs hard work, I'll skip off and chase butterflies. Good-by! (*Runs out*).

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8th Girl. (Regarding the arch) One block, the most important of all, remains to be placed—the key-stone on which the stability of our arch depends. I would place there the sacred word DUTY, fidelity to duty, without which all efforts must end in failure, or in false success that is worse than failure.

History furnishes us with many beautiful examples of heroic deeds performed by men or women who were influenced by a strong sense of duty. Have we not thrilled at the stories of brave soldiers or Red Cross nurses risking their lives on the battle-field to rescue a fallen comrade? of God's ministers, with noble self-devotion, fearlessly bringing the consolations of religion to a dying soldier while bursting shells crashed above their heads? In the sad disaster of the ocean steamer "Titanic", was it not this noble sentiment of Duty that kept the brave band-players at their post,—raising the trembling hearts of the doomed passengers to Heaven by the pious strains of "Nearer, my God, to Thee", until the solemn tones mingled with the sounds of rushing waters and the fated vessel sank beneath the waves.

The claims of Duty are imperative, but she leads us in the right path. Her countenance seems to us at times harsh and stern, but as we approach nearer to her, we perceive all its loveliness. If occasionally she is a relentless monitor, she is at all times a faithful friend, heedful of our best interests, mindful to reward. Then let us give the most honored place in this mystic arch to Duty. (*Places her block*). Now let each one of us promise to heed the lessons of our class memorial, as it casts its light upon our departing footsteps.

(The eight graduates ranged on each side bend forward towards the arch, and, raising their right hands, exclaim together, "I promise!" as electric lights shine forth around the arch).

END

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